

States. Director Comey continued in that hearing saying, “There is risk associated with bringing anybody in from the outside, but especially from a conflict zone like that.”

Director Comey has also previously acknowledged that despite a large pool of data on Iraqi refugees, our past program for admitting refugees from Iraq inadvertently allowed into our country “a number of people who were of serious concern, including two that were charged when we found their fingerprints on improvised explosive devices from Iraq.”

Our ability to screen individuals from war-torn Syria is extremely limited by comparison. Several States’ Governors have recognized this difficulty and have accordingly moved to suspend cooperation with the administration in settling Syrian refugees in their States until those security concerns are addressed. I share such concerns for protecting our country against terrorists who have clearly infiltrated the Syrian refugee population. I recently wrote a letter to the leaders of the Senate Appropriations Committee. In that letter I asked that taxpayers’ funds be used effectively to properly and securely screen refugees entering the United States. I also requested in the letter that as part of the appropriations legislation before the committee, it require a comprehensive plan on how security will be achieved. I requested this be a condition for any funding for refugee resettlement for Syrian refugees. I said then and I emphasize now that not one dollar should be expended until stringent parameters for vetting these refugees are established.

I would also suggest to President Obama that he reconsider his plan to admit Syrian refugees until the dust settles and we get to the bottom of the Paris attacks. We need to analyze what happened. We need to figure out how we can better screen these refugees and ensure that terrorists among them are not evading proper screenings. We need a timeout before we press forward.

I stress that the United States remains an extremely generous country when it comes to refugees. This year alone we will allow 75,000 refugees fleeing persecution around the world to enter our country, but we have to set our own citizens’ security as a top priority. I call on Congress to act to ensure that this administration certifies that the most stringent security standards are in place before allowing any more of the Syrian refugees into our country. It is our responsibility to do everything we can to prevent Friday’s attacks from happening here.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, I rise to urge my colleagues to vote to confirm this qualified judge, LaShann DeArcy Hall, to the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York.

Ms. Hall is an outstanding choice to fill this position. After decades of serv-

ice in both the public sector and the private sector, Ms. Hall’s breadth of knowledge and depth of experience will guide her for any case that happens to come before her. In her current role at a major international law firm, Ms. Hall specializes in high-stakes, complex commercial litigation. During her years of public service, including her time serving as a commissioner with the New York State Joint Commission on Public Ethics, Ms. Hall has worked tirelessly to help make her community a more fair and just place.

Ms. Hall’s credentials are absolutely worthy of this position on the Federal bench, and we will be a stronger nation with more women like Ms. Hall serving as judges in our Federal court system.

Ms. Hall is a graduate of Howard University School of Law and she served in the U.S. Air Force. She is a highly accomplished lawyer, and she has devoted her entire career to various forms of public service. She is dedicated to her community, and she cares deeply about this country. LaShann DeArcy Hall would make an excellent Federal judge and would add much needed diversity to the Federal bench.

Mr. President, I urge all my colleagues to vote to confirm her.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COATS). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that all time remaining on this nomination be yielded back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Hall nomination?

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT), the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. COTTON), the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), and the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) is necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 93, nays 1, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 305 Ex.]

YEAS—93

Alexander
Ayotte

Baldwin
Barrasso

Bennet
Blumenthal

Booker
Boozman
Boxer
Brown
Burr
Cantwell
Capito
Cardin
Carper
Casey
Cassidy
Coats
Cochran
Collins
Coons
Corker
Cornyn
Crapo
Daines
Donnelly
Durbin
Enzi
Ernst
Feinstein
Fischer
Flake
Franken
Gardner
Gillibrand

Grassley
Hatch
Heinrich
Heitkamp
Heller
Hirono
Hoeven
Inhofe
Isakson
Johnson
Kaine
King
Kirk
Klobuchar
Lankford
Leahy
Lee
Manchin
Markey
McCain
McCaskill
McConnell
Menendez
Merkley
Mikulski
Moran
Murkowski
Murphy
Murray

Nelson
Paul
Peters
Portman
Reed
Reid
Risch
Roberts
Rounds
Rubio
Sasse
Schatz
Schumer
Scott
Sessions
Shaheen
Shelby
Stabenow
Sullivan
Tester
Thune
Tillis
Toomey
Udall
Warner
Warren
Whitehouse
Wicker
Wyden

NAYS—1

Perdue

NOT VOTING—6

Blunt
Cotton
Cruz

Graham
Sanders
Vitter

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LANKFORD). Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate’s action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume legislative session.

The Senator from Oklahoma.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

MASTER SERGEANT JOSHUA L. WHEELER

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, the Presiding Officer, Senator LANKFORD, and I want to recognize and pay tribute to Army MSG Joshua Wheeler. Joshua was born in Roland, OK. He was deployed to Kirkuk Province, Iraq, in support of Operation Inherent Resolve. I didn’t remember him at the time, but I was there during that time. He was deployed to Kirkuk to support Operation Inherent Resolve. That was his 14th deployment in combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Joshua’s unit, along with Iraqi and Kurdish forces, raided a compound near the city of Kirkuk, freeing 70 prisoners from captivity. Josh died of injuries sustained in that firefight. He would have turned 40 this month.

Josh attended and graduated from Muldrow High School in 1994, and a

classmate of his, Ms. Tra Moreland, said this about Josh and his character:

If you would have asked me 20 years ago, would he be the man—the kind of man to do this, to give his life for everyone else? I'd say most definitely! I wish everybody could have known him!

Josh enlisted in the Army straight out of high school. During his military career, he served in the 24th Infantry Regiment, 75th Ranger Regiment, and from 2004 until the events that bring us here today, he was assigned to the U.S. Army Special Operations Command, where he served with the Delta Force.

I think we all understand what the Delta Force is all about. It is a unit of the elite, the very best of the best. That was Josh—the best of the best. Josh was the epitome of a selfless and patriotic soldier.

Mr. Lance Hunter, Sergeant Wheeler's friend of 30 years, said that Josh was the kind of person who would stop and help a stranger change a tire on the side of the road and always dedicated himself to challenges.

When he enlisted, I knew he would go as far as he could go. He was made to be a soldier.

A soldier he was. During his career, Master Sergeant Wheeler had earned 11 Bronze Stars, including 4 with Valor Device, and countless other medals. He was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart for his actions during the raid on the ISIS prison. He is a true American hero.

Secretary of Defense Ash Carter expressed how selfless Sergeant Wheeler's actions were, stating that “they weren't part of the original rescue mission plan, but were critical to the mission's success.” In other words, he did something he didn't have to do. Still, the Secretary is one of thousands who know what a hero Josh really is.

I was honored to hear that his hometown honored him by engraving his name in a stone monument and releasing hundreds of balloons in his memory. On top of being a highly decorated soldier, he was a consummate family man and father of four. Joshua's grandfather, Mr. Jack Shamblyn of Roland, OK, said his grandson loved fishing and hunting and was a family man and was always taking care of everyone else, including his four half sisters.

His brother Zack said:

He was a soldier, but I didn't realize he had all of these accomplishments, all these achievements—it just blows my mind. He's an American hero, he just wanted to take care of people.

Ms. April Isa, a classmate of Josh's and an English teacher now at the old high school said:

He was always funny, even mischievous, but always the guy who seemed like he had your back. Most of our class was cliques, but he wasn't with just one group. He was friends with everyone.

Josh lived a life for his family and friends. I had occasion to talk to Ashley, and I found out that he was a real Jesus guy. He loved everyone, and he knew what was going to happen to him,

and we know where he is today. He will be remembered for his commitment to and belief in the greatness of our Nation, and his memory and legacy will continue forever in the love of his wife Ashley and his four sons, Zachariah, Matthew, Joshua Junior, and the youngest, David, just 3 months old.

The fight that took Josh's life is tragic. But make no mistake; his sacrifice made a difference and will continue to make a difference, not just in Iraq but in the security of our great Nation. We are safe in our country, and it is secure because of Josh and our service men and women. We must continue our unwavering support of them.

I extend our deepest gratitude and condolences to Josh's family. Senator LANKFORD and I are honored to pay tribute to this true American hero who volunteered to go into the fight and to make the ultimate sacrifice of his life for our freedom. It is my sincere hope that his family takes solace in knowing that their husband, father, brother, grandson, and friend is a true American hero and will not be forgotten. We say God bless you, Josh. We will see you again.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. INHOFE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I come to the floor of the Senate today to talk about the sacrifice of one of Oklahoma's own, MSG Joshua Wheeler of Roland, OK, Sequoyah County, America. The current Presiding Officer today is Senator INHOFE, and the two of us together recognize and celebrate the life of someone who laid down his life for the Nation.

Roland and Muldrow are proud towns in eastern Oklahoma. It is Cherokee country, where families take care of other families and small-town American patriotism still thrives. It is the land of tall trees and very strong churches.

Josh was killed in action on October 22 while liberating captives held by ISIL in northern Iraq. Josh was part of a team assisting Kurdish commandos to rescue 70 hostages who were about to be executed by Islamic State militants. There was aerial reconnaissance that had shown a newly dug mass grave at the prison where these 70 prisoners were being held.

When the Kurdish attack on the prison where the hostages were being held stalled, Master Sergeant Wheeler responded. He could not watch the Kurdish forces face the attack without help. He would not allow those men inside the facility to face execution when he could help them escape. Master Sergeant Wheeler breached the wall. He

engaged the enemy. The full force of the attack came directly at him, and he saved the day and six dozen men.

You need to know that Master Sergeant Wheeler was the best of the best, the most highly trained warrior in the entire Department of Defense. Josh deployed three times as a Ranger in support of combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, then Master Sergeant Wheeler was assigned to the U.S. Army Special Operations Command in 2004 and was deployed 11 additional times in support of combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Master Sergeant Wheeler was highly decorated. We can see this from his uniform. Let me tell you a little bit about his awards. They included four Bronze Star Medals with Valor Device; seven Bronze Star Medals; the Defense Meritorious Service Medal; the Meritorious Service Medal; the Air Medal; the Joint Service Commendation Medal with Valor Device; the Joint Service Commendation Medal; seven Army Commendation Medals; the Joint Service Achievement Medal; eight Army Achievement Medals; the Good Conduct Medal, sixth award; the National Defense Service Medal with Bronze Service Star; the Afghanistan Campaign Medal with three Bronze Service Stars; the Iraq Campaign Medal with six Bronze Service Stars; the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal; the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal; the Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon, third award; the Army Service Ribbon; the Presidential Unit Citation; the Valorous Unit Award, second award; the Ranger Tab; the Combat Infantryman Badge; the Expert Infantryman Badge; the Master Parachutist Badge; three Overseas Service Bars; and finally, posthumously, the Purple Heart.

He did everything his country asked him to do and more. Master Sergeant Wheeler was the first American serviceman killed in combat in Iraq since 2011. Americans, Kurds, and Iraqis alike owe Master Sergeant Wheeler and his family our deepest gratitude and respect for a life of selfless service. John 15:13 tells us that no greater love is this, than one who lays down his life for his friends. Josh did exactly that. Master Sergeant Wheeler's sacrifice exemplifies the highest virtue in defense of his family, friends, and Nation.

Speaking of his friends, they called him a cutup. He was someone who made everyone laugh. He was a friend to everyone.

I spoke to his wife Ashley last week, and she recounted his faith, toughness, and passion for his boys—all four of them. He was able to come home a few months ago for the birth of his fourth son. It was a peaceful and joyous respite from the brutal realities of war that Josh faced for years.

Josh spent his life defending the weak and standing up for those who needed help. He spent much of his childhood caring for his siblings. He valued life, freedom, and duty.

In contrast to Master Sergeant Wheeler's heroism and selflessness, let me remind you whom he was fighting against. In the days following the Paris attack, we understand that the barbarians of ISIL had no problem randomly killing people at a restaurant, soccer stadium, or concert. They kill for intimidation and pleasure. They do not even value their own lives, much less the lives of the people around them. The Islamic State has committed some of the most horrific acts of death the modern world has ever seen. Their fight is against all modern society, and their goal is to return the world to a medieval state ruled by fear. They have abducted girls and women, called them subhuman for practicing the wrong religion according to them, and sold them as sex slaves. In the world of ISIL, women can't get an education, drive a car, or even have their own rights. They kill and torture anyone who doesn't agree with them. Their reach extends to our own citizens. No one can forget the horrific deaths of James Foley, Stephen Sotloff, and Kayla Mueller, a 26-year-old woman who wanted to do good for the people of Syria but met pure evil when she got there.

Recently, FBI Director James Comey spoke about ISIL's attempts to inspire Americans to turn on each other with blind brutality. Go out and kill, they say. It doesn't matter who, just act. Good men stand up to such evil. They don't allow it to grow and multiply.

We honor Master Sergeant Wheeler's sacrifice and tenacious commitment to confront evil. We humbly thank his family for the sacrifice they made so that we may all live in a more peaceful world. Our Nation cannot say thank you loud enough or long enough to his family.

When I spoke to Ashley, Josh's wife, she recounted when the doorbell rang early that morning. It didn't even cross her mind that it was about Josh. He was so tough and so dedicated. Who would have ever thought he would be gone? The painful and long process of grieving over a lost hero has just begun. Master Sergeant Wheeler was killed in action defending our freedom on October 22. His final service will be this week—just a few days before his birthday. The long days of Thanksgiving and Christmas are still ahead.

Please join me in praying for the family of Master Sergeant Wheeler as our Nation grieves the loss of a husband, father, grandson, and friend to those who knew him. He is a hero to the Nation and the many lives he saved a month ago this week. May God bless Josh's family. May his boys grow up to be men who remember their dad's love for them and our Nation.

With that, I yield back.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

(Mr. LANKFORD assumed the Chair.)

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DAINES). Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2016—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 138, H.R. 2577.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 138, H.R. 2577, a bill making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. McCONNELL. I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 138, H.R. 2577, an act making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

Mitch McConnell, John Cornyn, Mike Crapo, Richard C. Shelby, Richard Burr, Daniel Coats, Ben Sasse, Thom Tillis, John Hoeven, Roger F. Wicker, Chuck Grassley, Susan M. Collins, Thad Cochran, James Lankford, Lamar Alexander, Roy Blunt, Steve Daines.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call under rule XXII be waived with respect to the cloture vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TERRORIST ATTACKS AGAINST FRANCE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I want to express what I know each of my colleagues feels today. We, the 100 men and women of the U.S. Senate, send our sincere condolences to the people of France. From across the Atlantic, Americans send condolences to the victims, to the families, and to the first responders.

We understand the pain and the loss that accompany a terrorist attack. Some feel it in the most personal way. Some never come home. But everyone shares in the loss. In our case, many shared in the response and the recovery as well.

In a dark hour we were reminded of the things that bound us together. I hope you will feel something similar take hold in your terrible hour as well.

We have already seen rays of light begin to shine through the darkness. We saw it even last Friday. Then, as Paris reeled, a soft hum emanated from a tunnel. "March," came the echo in French. "March on." Enemies in history and rivals on the soccer pitch had united around a common humanity. Dazed, disoriented but alive, French and German fans marched through the tunnels together. Some put defiance to verse. "Against us," they sang, "tyranny has unfurled its bloody banner." And indeed, that night it had. A song sung so many times before came alive with new meaning that horrible night. Many knew it as the French national anthem, but that night it became an aria for their sorrow and an ode to their fraternity. We heard it here, from an ocean away.

We add our voices to the harmony now. We know that the attacks were not just directed at the victims we mourn today but also at modernity and the free world.

President Obama has called ISIL the face of evil. It clearly presents a challenge to NATO, to our moderate Sunni allies, and to the United States. It has also shown that it can attack innocent victims in the West, too—right where they live. These terrorists have declared their intention to do so again and again.

We know that trying to contain ISIL's conventional advance as an operational concept has proven insufficient in the face of determined terrorist attacks, but we also know something else. With resolve and determination, ISIL can be defeated. It won't be easy. It won't come quickly or without cost, but we also have no other option.

I look forward to engaging with President Obama to determine his strategy and the tools that will be necessary to achieve it. We are looking forward to hearing the President's proposed strategy when Senators are briefed by the White House later this week. Whatever he does, though, I would encourage him to work cooperatively with both parties on the way forward. This is a challenge that is going to require all of our efforts to confront, and it is a discussion that will be ongoing.

But today is a time to remember and to reflect. We have the people of France in our thoughts today. That is true here in the Senate, and it is certainly true out across our country.

MORNING BUSINESS

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, today we will vote on the nomination of LaShann Hall to be a Federal district judge in the Eastern District of New York. She was nominated over a year